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ABSTRACT

A description is provided of the Garrison Model, an educational therapeutic program for youth with severe behavior disorders which emphasizes a student's responsibility for choices that are made. The model was developed at the Garrison School, a public alternative day school in Illinois that serves students with severe behavioral disorders. The following key elements of the model are discussed: the whole school approach, direct social skills training, positive involvement in the community through community service learning, elimination of suspension coupled with logical natural consequences for inappropriate behavior, interagency coordination, safe school planning, gang identification, intervention and prevention, creating a positive environment and using a level system, positive acknowledgement of student success, violence intervention through the team approach, developing good community public relations, establishing a school business partnership, and accenting the positive. (Contains 10 references.) (SW)

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THE GARRISON MODEL
AN EFFECTIVE PROGRAM FOR MANAGING THE BEHAVIORS OF STUDENTS WITH BEHAVIORAL DISORDERS

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THE GARRISON MODEL:
AN EFFECTIVE PROGRAM FOR MANAGING THE BEHAVIORS
OF ADOLESCENTS WITH BEHAVIOR DISORDERS

The Garrison Model is an educational based therapeutic program for severely behavior disordered youth that continually emphasizes a student's responsibility for the choices that he or she makes. This approach to dealing with students with behavior disorders has proven effective in reducing violence and inappropriate behaviors of the students enrolled in the Garrison School located in Jacksonville, Illinois. The Model was developed at the Garrison School, a public alternative day school, that serves students identified as having severe behavioral disorders. The school is a part of the Four Rivers Special Education Cooperative District #801. The key components of the school, along with the emphasis on student responsibility for actions, include the whole school approach; direct social skills training; positive involvement in the community through Community Service Learning; elimination of suspension coupled with the development of logical and natural consequences for inappropriate behavior; interagency coordination; safe school planning; gang identification, intervention and prevention; creating a positive environment and using a level system; positive acknowledgement of student success; violence intervention through the team approach; developing good community public relations; establishing a school business partnership, and accenting the positive. A description of these key elements will follow.

THE WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH

The Garrison Model was developed by the staff of the Garrison School under the leadership of Bev Johns, Program Supervisor. The concept of teacher/staff empowerment has been an underlying force in the model's success. All staff are directly involved in formulating annual program goals, and developing plans for meeting those goals. By involving all staff the program has maintained a cohesive approach. As a group, the staff, sets annual goals at the end of each year. The staff prioritize goals and then break into subgroups that develop plans to meet the top ranked goals. These subgroups also develop time lines for implantation of the goals the following year.

Not only do we set goals for the school, each staff member sets a personal goal for the following year. All goals are posted, school and personal, and reviewed periodically throughout the year. From our experience, posted goals, reviewed periodically at staff meetings get met. The goal-setting process has kept us focused, unified, and purposeful in our approach to the students.

Weekly staff meetings are another important aspect of our success with our students. Teacher assistants, teachers, the social worker, behavior specialist, school secretary, and supervisor all meet at a weekly staff meeting to discuss school issues, student concerns, program concerns, and recognize success. Staff work

cooperatively at the weekly staff meetings to brain storm solutions to concerns as they arise. The meetings are also a time to recognize successes of students and staff.

Perhaps the most important aspect of the whole school approach was the development of whole school expectations and major infractions. The staff developed a list of the whole school expectations that all students should follow. These are basic operating procedures. In addition the staff developed a list of whole school major infractions. If these behaviors occur then there are set consequences that apply. The development of whole school expectations and major infractions has kept our procedures firm, fair and consistent and facilitated a unified staff approach to our students.

Students are keenly aware that all staff work together and share common goals for the school. The impact of this manner of operating can be seen as students realize that they cannot "pit" staff members against each other or easily manipulate staff. This method of operation keeps approaches to students unified and consistent -- a must for success with behavioral disordered students.

Without a cohesive staff the following components of the model would lose a portion of their potential for success.

SOCIAL SKILLS TRAINING

The Garrison Model advocates the direct teaching of social skills. Each of the teachers at Garrison hold daily class meetings with their students. Through the use of the class meeting, teachers can facilitate social skills training. During this time students plan certain aspects of the their class such as special events, rewards such as a movie or special food that they will prepare, discuss problems that have arisen in their class; and develop solutions to the problems. We have found that when students are directly involved in the process of problem solving they respond more appropriately to the solution or consequence that resolves the issue. Through this method we are also able to directly teach problem solving skills and utilize them in natural situations.

The direct instruction of social skills is used in all classes at Garrison. Skills are introduced in the class meetings, and students practice the skills through observation of demonstrations and role play. Staff emphasize the skills throughout the week or period of instruction. A listing of social skill curriculum in use at Garrison is included in the reference section.

A second way in which social skills training is emphasized in our program is through the use of "whole school social skill monthly themes". A committee of staff establishes a social skill theme for each month. During that month there are activities for staff and students that center on that theme. We have found that when staff

are active participants in the themes and role model and/or participate along with the students there is a more active involvement in the theme. Some examples of themes are: "Giving Compliments": All students and staff were given a yarn pom pon necklace to wear. As they gave a compliment to another person they gave a thread from their pom pon and tied it onto the other person's pom pon. Everyone got into the spirit including the janitor! Another there was, "Using Manners": each time a student was caught using manners a check mark was added to their class chart. The class with the most checks at the end of the week received a special treat. "Recognizing Strengths and Talents" (December theme): All students and staff developed a Christmas package poster that listed or depicted their individual talents or strengths that they could share with others. All student and staff posters were displayed in the halls during December.

From our experience, we found that when staff were directly involved, the process was far better received and the staff modeling of the behaviors increased the student participation. We also found that when these were whole school activities there was better participation and involvement.

COMMUNITY SERVICE LEARNING

All students at the Garrison School are required to participate in Community Service Learning. The purpose of this curriculum component is to provide opportunities for students to realize that they can provide assistance to others and can be a valuable part of their community. In addition, a side purpose was to show the community the potential of our students. So often the community perception of the students was limited only one aspect of the student's personality.

Each class selects their own community service project and develops a schedule for involvement. Classes provide weekly service to their site. All students are required to participate. Those students who give 4 hours a week receive a grade and credit for their work.

Staff participate along with students and classes go as a group to their sites. Staff members role model skills and involvement side-by-side with the students. If problems or concerns arise, the class meetings are used to work out solutions or practice needed social skills. Student benefit has been outstanding. We have found that several students improved their attendance due to their involvement in community service; some improved their hygiene by dressing up to "go out to their job"; others felt needed and wanted, some for the first time; while others were offered jobs. One student, heavily gang involved, who worked with young children at a local day care had a child cry when she left to return to school. On the way home she repeated over and over that no one had ever cried because she left, ever.

We have found that when students with behavioral disorders become involved in projects where other people rely on them they develop

a sensitivity to the needs of others as well a feeling of self-worth. Another benefit of this curriculum component in our school was that the community began to see our students in a new light -- one in which they saw our students as capable of doing something good. It is our belief that the learning "on the site" taught lasting skills that generalize to other outside of school settings.

Since the implementation of this program 3 and 1/2 years ago, we now have various agencies calling our school asking for our help! Examples of community service sites include: day care facilities; State facilities for the Developmentally Disabled, the Salvation Army Store and Senior Citizen Center; nursing homes; public library; city park system; community food pantry; hospital pediatric unit; and college alumni office.

ELIMINATION OF SUSPENSION/IMPLEMENTATION OF RESPONSIBILITY BASED DISCIPLINE

The constant theme in Garrison School is "It's your choice. Make a good decision for yourself.". Garrison does not suspend students for any reason. A student who hits someone will have charges for battery pressed with the local police and afterward return to school. The students are told, upon entering, that there are no behaviors that will get them suspended from school. From our experience, suspension is a highly rewarding consequence that for many of our students has been the motivation behind some of their inappropriate behavior in other settings.

Once we establish that there is no suspension we let the students know about the logical and natural consequences that occur in our program. All students are given a verbal explanation of the school expectations and consequences upon entering. All parents receive this information at their son or daughter's MDC/IEP meeting. We include a detailed Behavior Management Plan attached to the IEP and each item is discussed with parents and the student. We want no surprise consequences.

An important part of our plan is the use of Behavior Specific Dialogue. All staff use this manner of speaking with students. Briefly, it involves giving students two requests only to comply with teacher directive, stop inappropriate behavior, or respond to staff. If, after two requests are given, the student has not complied then the logical consequence is given according the school and classroom expectations. At all times it is the student who chooses the consequence or reward for his or her behavior. In our program the staff do not make choices for the student; the responsibility for choice is clearly on the student. The whole school expectations and major infraction lists provide for a firm, fair and consistent approach to discipline that the students accept. All staff work to uniformly enforce a consistent approach that treats students fairly.

Responsibility based discipline places consequences on students that make them responsible for their actions. One example of how this works can be seen with the student who refuses to work, puts

his/her head down on the desk and says,"You can't make me." This student knows that he will be given two chances to complete the work within a set request time limit. If the student does not comply he/she knows that the staff will begin timing "time for time" after school. For the amount of time that the student refused to work he or she will remain after school and complete the assignment. After one or two episodes of "time for time" work refusal begins to diminish.

Likewise, consider the student who, with the intent to harm, hits another student. In Garrison School we consider any action that would be construed as a crime in the community to be a crime in the school setting as well. Police would be called and charges pressed by the school. We have found that to help students realize their community rights and responsibilities we must enforce the same standards in the school setting. All parents and students receive a thorough explanation of our police involvement. From our experience when students realize that a school will treat criminal activity as such there is noticeable reduction of that type of activity. We believe that we owe it to our students to teach realistic social expectations and consequences. We firmly believe that because they are in a school setting their actions the would be considered crime in society are not accountable.

In the same manner we never overlook low-level aggression. Any action of low-level aggression that is witnessed by staff is addressed immediately. If a staff member witnesses low level aggression he or she will immediately intervene and when appropriate give a consequence for the aggressive behavior. Low-level aggression includes intimidation, cruel teasing, physical bumping, etc. Often when confronted students say, "I was just playing with him or her." or "It was just a joke." or "I was just teasing. We do this all the time.". However, we have found that once low-level aggression begins it most likely leads to higher levels of aggression. It must be stopped to assure a safe school. By addressing low level aggression directly we have found a decrease in this type of behavior.

Conflict resolution is a key element in our program. This is the process of two students working out the solution to 'their' problem with a mediator. Briefly, each student has a chance to tell his/her side of the problem and then the students brain storm solutions and select the best one. They are responsible for resolving the problem; the adult mediator simply facilitates the discussion. In Garrison, this is used whenever there is a noticeable conflict between two students, a staff member and a student, or even two staff members. Students in Garrison are required to participate in conflict resolution to come to closure on their problem. At Garrison, we use the curriculum material produced by Fred Schrumpf, Peer Mediation. Our experience with the use of conflict resolution has been productive in bringing closure to conflict with students with severe behavioral disorders.

The introduction of this component into our program has had a very

positive impact on verbal aggression and been instrumental in preventing verbal altercations from proceeding to physical altercations. It has also been instrumental in preventing low level aggression from escalating. The process blends with the social skills training, in that it utilizes the use of "I" statements with the student expression of feelings and beliefs.

We have found that our students do not know how to come to closure on problems. The use of conflict resolution has been a excellent teaching tool as well as brought an appropriate forum for students to discuss problems. Once again, when all students know that this will be expected of them, they will participate. We have found that even our most gang involved, street smart kids are very capable of using conflict resolution with positive results.

Following the same process as conflict resolution we use the Climate Committee whenever a problem behavior continues even after we have tried all means of intervention. Parents and the student as well as the party who has the concern meet with the "climate committee" and give their sides of the concern. In this process the committee consists of volunteer staff and parents who hear the concern and assist in the resolution by offering consequences or alternative interventions. This process is a fair approach to persistent concerns. We have found that teachers and bus drivers both have used the process.

Logical and natural consequences include restitution, repairing damage, cleaning up whatever was thrown or flung around. Positive natural consequences include earned privileges based upon behavior, recognition, and rewards based upon behavior.

The use of police, as mentioned in an earlier example, is a vital logical consequence. We have found that a consistent use of the police has been a deterrent to crime and aggression in our program. The incorporation of consequences that are directly related to the behavior have been the most successful interventions.

INTERAGENCY COORDINATION

The development of an interagency coordinating council has been a tremendous asset in the ability to provide services and coordinate efforts for students. The coordinating council consists of all agencies and organizations that are involved with students. Agencies that participate with Garrison include: Department of Child and Family Services, local Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Center, Probation, Parole, Police Department, Community Counseling Center, Assistant States Attorney, and Truant Officer. These agencies are invited to attend meetings to discuss concerns and interagency coordination or services.

From these meetings we have been able to develop a coordinated effort in dealing with student concerns. In particular our efforts resulted in a communication network, facilitation of a truancy task force, and open communication between police and the school regarding guidelines and governing policies. The improvement in

the communication and working relationship between the agencies has lead to improved response to student needs.

SAFE SCHOOL PLANNING

With the increase in violence that has been occurring in the schools, Garrison School has put into place several policies and procedures that address these concerns and are considered violence reduction interventions.

The most obvious violence reduction intervention is the monitoring process of staff in our program. Hallway, classroom, lunchroom, before and after school waiting areas -- all areas of the school -- are monitored at all times by staff. Even, bathrooms are monitored by staff standing outside the door to check the bathroom before and after use by students. The monitoring process has been significant in providing a safe environment.

Various procedures have been implemented to assure safety. One in particular is the search procedure. Students are informed upon entering the school that, when there is "reasonable cause", searches will be conducted of the student and his or her belongings. Procedures were developed and are followed consistently. The searches have resulted in the reduction of contraband and inappropriate items being brought into the school. They also serve as a provision for a safe environment. If items or contraband are found, a contraband receipt is given to the student for the purpose of reclaiming the item. We have found this to be a respectful manner of dealing with confiscated material.

The coordinated effort between the Police and the school is perhaps the most important element in reducing violence. Garrison students are keenly aware that the school does not tolerate violence. They also are aware that the Police work with the school staff and will respond when called by the school. Through our open discussion with our local police during our coordinating council meetings, we have developed procedures for their use. We will only call police and press charges when we have an adult witness. In addition, we press charges as a school against the perpetrator. When the school presses charges we eliminate some of the potential victim harassment and retaliation. We also follow specific guidelines for documenting and recording the incident by providing written documentation to the arresting officer, probation department, and assistant states attorney. Parents are notified at the time of the incident. Again students are not suspended for criminal activity. They face the legal consequences and return to school immediately.

GANG IDENTIFICATION AND PREVENTION

In efforts to prevent gang activity from entering the school Garrison has taken a "No Tolerance" approach. This approach is adamant in the belief that we want the student in school, but will tolerate no gang activity of any nature in our school. Again, no one is suspended for gang activity, but there are set consequences for such behavior. Through the dress code, Garrison addressed

consequences for attire that "represents"; through the major infraction list Garrison addressed drawings, gestures, statements and comments that were gang related. All staff inform students, upon entering, that our school networks periodically with the police and shares any gang related information from students. By addressing any incident of gang activity directly and immediately we have been able to suppress this activity in the school. However, this remains a constant vigil, in which we never let down our guard.

Another benefit of our networking with the local police has been the provision of whole school inservice on area gang activity. With all staff receiving training on signs, representing, and language we have a unified staff approach to the issue.

CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENT ISSUES

It is the belief of the Garrison School staff that the appearance of the school is an important element in providing service to students. Three years ago, the Garrison staff began a school beautification plan. Real, and artificial, plants were added to the halls and classrooms. Bulletin boards were once again decorated. (The decoration of bulletin boards had been somewhat abandoned due to past destruction. However, with the inclusion of restitution as a logical consequence for destruction of property decorated bulletin boards were returning.) Any newspaper clipping regarding the students or staff were framed and hung in the halls. The building took on the look of an upscale "regular school".

To involve students in ownership, a beautification day was instituted in which students and staff spent a part of the day making an improvement in their classroom or some area of the school. Each class and all staff members were also given a "school job" on a monthly basis. Some classes water plants, others file pictures in the school photo album, another class picks up the school yard, etc.

The change in environment has been dramatic. But, more importantly, the student response has been positive. Since the initiation of beautification of the school (and the implementation of restitution for damage) there has been little if any property damage. The student reaction has been one of respect. From our experience, the nature and quality of the environment definitely impacts students. A positive appearance, sends a message that the students are valued and respected.

The development of a student council has also become a part of the school climate. The council is comprised of one student per classroom and meets on a monthly basis. The council discusses and makes recommendations to the staff on issues regarding school purchases from fund raiser monies, school procedures, school needs, and the council plans all special events. They have planned Halloween parties, Valentine's Day Dances, A Spring Carnival and Bike Safety Events. Each council member is reminded that they represent their class--representing others can be a most difficult

task for behavioral disordered students! Student involvement in the school process has been a productive aspect regarding student empowerment.

Garrison school has adopted the use of level systems in each classroom. Each teacher designs and develops his/her level system to meet the needs of the students in that particular class. The level systems utilize the whole school expectations and major infractions as well as the student's goals from IEPs as key components. The use of the level system has helped students see success, gain from success and feel successful.

VIOLENCE INTERVENTION

Violence intervention is fast becoming a concern of all schools. The Garrison Model has established clear consequences for violence as listed earlier. In addition there is a definite whole school approach to violence that has been beneficial in intervention and prevention.

The first aspect of this approach is the use of "time out" for students who are showing signs of frustration and escalation of aggressive behaviors. Students are expected to learn ways in which they can control their impulses. Many need to do this in a area that is away from others. The Garrison School has 2 time out rooms for this purpose. Students know that they can use these rooms to take a few minutes to get calm, think through the situation, and then return to class. To circumvent inappropriate use of time-out, such as using the time-out room to get out of work, guidelines for use were drawn up by the staff and are applied consistently. From our positive experience with the use of time-out it is our belief that all schools would benefit from the use of time-out room in their buildings.

The second component to violence intervention is the use of a team approach to aggressing students. The Garrison Model believes that all schools should have a team of staff, 4-8 members, trained in safe physical intervention. The team should respond when a student is an endangerment to self or others, or is so disruptive that the academic environment is disrupted to the point that the teacher cannot continue to teach. The Garrison Model staff have has developed their own training techniques and methods of respectful and safe physical intervention. Any such team needs to be trained in physical intervention techniques before use. In addition, procedures and policy must be established before implementation into the school setting.

Perhaps the most important aspect of having a team in place is the whole school attitude that is presented to the students: "In this school, we do not tolerate aggression. We have a plan to deal with aggressive and violent situations swiftly, calmly, respectfully, and with skilled staff." Students, who in the past, gained attention, power, or glory from aggression found that with the team in place those benefits no longer existed. Students in our program have stated to us that the program has become boring during the

last few years since there are no longer "blows". We attribute this "boring atmosphere" to the implementation of the team component of our program. We have found that the mere presence of a team has been a positive factor in reducing violence. From our personal experience we have seen a significant decrease in violence since our "team" was implemented.

ACCENTING THE POSITIVE

While the Garrison Model has established whole school consequences for major infractions; developed whole school expectations; established logical and natural consequences; instituted gang and violence prevention; the Model has not failed to recognize that schools cannot take good behavior for granted. In addition to the consequences the school has implemented a system of recognition for appropriate behaviors.

Briefly, the following are just a few of the many attempts at bringing recognition to students for demonstrating appropriate behavior: Weekly Honor Roll; Monthly Perfect Attendance Pizza Party; End of Year Perfect Attendance Monetary Award; Student of the Week; Class of the Month; Good Citizen Award; Garrison Store with "money" based on good behavior; Quarterly Award Assemblies recognizing academics, behaviors, community service involvement; Classroom Level Systems (earned privileges based on academics and behavior).

The Model works to recognize positives, however, from experience we have found that many times our students are unable to accept positive recognition and often "blow" after receiving an award. Perseverance paid off. Even after students had difficulty accepting positives the process stayed in place. We found that over time students can learn to accept positives (another in the many steps of social skill training).

DEVELOPING POSITIVE PUBLIC RELATIONS

A concern of our staff was that the inappropriate actions of a few seem to overshadow the positives of others in our school. With most of the community recognition of our students coming from the inclusion of a few in the Police Beat section of the local paper, Garrison found that developing positive public relations was a necessity in promoting the positive aspects of our school, our model, and our students.

Contacts with the local newspaper editor were the beginning. Over time our local newspaper began to recognize Garrison as a viable school in the community. A (positive) feature article was a final result. The article is framed and hanging in the school hall. Our local paper sponsors a "school correspondence corner" which never fails to have a least on Garrison entry. Photos of classroom events and special events are submitted at each opportunity. Staff recognize the importance of publicizing positive aspects of our program and students. We have found that our public image has improved over time.

Developing positive relationships with business has been a goal for the past few years. The Garrison School joined the Chamber of Commerce recently and is as active part of the education committee. We recently entered into a business/school partnership.

Through out the year various organizations have helped the school sponsor events or provided funds or materials for students. In an effort to recognize and thank the community Garrison sponsors a Thanksgiving Dinner for those in the community who have offered support. Students are assigned to guests as escorts for the dinner. The response has been overwhelming. All members of the interagency coordinating council are also included in these events. The event give us the ability to show our students and school in a positive way. Students have the opportunity to practice appropriate social skills with community members.

To keep parents, staff and the community aware of our school, Garrison Newsletter was developed. The newsletter gives teachers and staff the opportunity to highlight students and activities. To keep our administration aware of our progress, the Garrison Newsletter is sent to our Board members, director, and assistant director.

SCHOOL BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP

Garrison School has worked to develop a school business partnership. The school joined the Chamber of Commerce and made inroads with the community through the community service component. The development of the school business partnership has provided some funding but, more importantly, has given community members and students a chance to interact and develop relationships.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Parents are also an important part of the Garrison Model. Opportunities are provided for parent input through the Parent Advisory Council and Support Group. Parent visitation opportunities are provided through Open House and Parent Visitation Day. Parents are kept informed of happenings and good news through a Garrison Newsletter which works to highlight the positive accomplishments of the students and school. Parents are always welcome in our school.

In summary, the Garrison Model is comprehensive in approach encompassing many components. The Model stresses respectful interventions for students with the goal of improving appropriate student behaviors and academic achievement through responsibility based interventions. While the Model was developed for students with severe behavioral needs it has the ability to be adapted to any school situation. The Garrison Model has been implemented into regular education elementary schools and high schools and has met with success. As the Model is implemented in a variety of settings the authors believe that it will become a preventive measure for reducing violence and aggression not only with students with behavioral disorders but within the whole domain of public schools.

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